

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DODE-00 EB-08 NSAE-00 USIA-06
TRSE-00 SOE-01 DOE-12 CIAE-00 COME-00 L-03 /043 W
-----118021 220223Z /75

R 211500Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5896

MARAD WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EEWT, EWWT, UR, US

SUBJECT: ODESSA OFFICIALS CITE MORE STRINGENT REGULATIONS ON
ADVANCE PORT NOTIFICATION

SUMMARY: TWO ODESSA PORT OFFICIALS IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH
A KIEV ADVANCE PARTY OFFICIAL, WHILE VOICING CONCERN ABOUT PORT
CONGESTION FROM ANTICIPATED U.S. GRAIN SHIPMENTS, CITED A NEW
REQUIREMENT FOR TEN OR TWELVE DAYS ADVANCE PORT NOTIFICATION,
LESS PORT AUTHORITIES BE UNABLE TO "GUARANTEE RAPID AND EFFICIENT
PORT SERVICE." OFFICIALS ALSO CITED INTERNAAL COMMUNICATIONS
PROBLEMS WHICH LEAVE THEM UNINFORMED ABOUT US GRAIN SHIPMENTS.
WE ARE ASKING THAT KAP SEEK EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO REMIND THEM
THAT US-USSR MARITIME AGREEMENT PORT PROCEDURES, WHICH ARE
BINDING IN THESE CASES, PROVIDE FOR FOUR-DAY NOTIFICATION FOR
US VESSLES. WE CAN FOLLOW UP WITH MORFLOT IN MOSCOW IF
ODESSA OFFICIALS WERE TO RESIST THIS INTERPRETATION. END SUMMARY.

1. ON DECEMBER 8, 1977, CAPTAIN ALEXANDER A. OVCHINNIKOV,
MANAGER OF MAIN MARITIME AGENCY INFLOT IN ODESSA, AND HIS
ASSISTANT, VLADIMIR A. POPOV (PROTECT BOTH), TOLD VISITING
KAP CON OFF THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT INCREASED PORT
CONGESTION WHICH COULD RESULT FROM INCREASED US SHIPMENTS TO
ODESSA. THEY MENTIONED "UNOFFICIAL" INFORMATION CONCERNING
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LARGE SOVIET PURCHASES OF US GRAIN IN THE RECENT PAST AND
INFLOT'S ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE SERVICE TO SHIPS USING THE
PORTS OF ODESSA AND NEARBY ILICHEVSK. THEY ASSUMED THAT
THESE TWO BLACK SEA PORTS WILL RECEIVE THE BULK OF ANY
INCREASE IN GRAIN SHIPMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN WINTER, SINCE
THEY ARE VIRTUALLY ICE-FREE AND ARE MORE CENTRALLY LOCATED
FOR DISTRIBUTION OF FOODSTUFFS THAN THE SOVIET BALTIC OR

FAR EAST PORTS.

2. BOTH OFFICIALS INDIRECTLY CRITICIZED THEIR GOVERNMENT'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR DELIVERY OF GRAIN, STATING THAT SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS WHICH PURCHASE GRAIN AND ARRANGE FOR GRAIN VESSELS DO NOT NORMALLY PROVIDE TO THE PORT THE NUMBERS AND SCHEDULE OF ARRIVING SHIPS. THIS LACK OF PLANNING INFORMATION PREVENTS INFLOT FROM PREPARING FOR EXPECTED GREATER THAN NORMAL NUMBER OF ARRIVALS AND CAUSES DELAYS IN UNLOADING OF SHIPS, THEY ASSERTED. INFLOT OFFICIALS TOLD CONOFF THEY WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION THE US COULD PROVIDE CONCERNING SPECIFIC SHIP ARRIVALS AND TONNAGES.

3. SOVIET SHIPPING REPRESENTATIVES SAID THEY WERE TAKING STEPS TO "IMPROVE" ODESSA-ILICHEVSK PORT OPERATIONS. ONE EXAMPLE OF SUCH IMPROVEMENT WAS TO INCREASE THE REQUIREMENT FOR ADVANCE NOTICE OF SHIP ARRIVALS FROM SEVEN DAYS TO TEN OR TWELVE DAYS. INCOMING VESSELS MUST NOW ALSO PROVIDE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION CONCERNING SHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND CARGO, THEY SAID. SOVIETS REMARKED THAT IF THESE NEW REQUIREMENTS ARE COMPLIED WITH, INFLOT CAN "GUARANTEE RAPID AND EFFICIENT PORT SERVICE."

4. COMMENT: JUDGING BY THEIR REMARKS, THESE PORT OFFICIALS FEAR INFLOT-INSPIRED IMPROVEMENTS IN OPERATIONS OF THESE MAJOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOVIET PORTS MAY WELL BE OBSTRUCTED BY US GRAIN IMPORTS. POSSIBLY THEY ARE ENVISIONING CASES IN WHICH SOVIET GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE REQUIRED TO PAY US TRANSPORTERS DEMURRAGE FOR HARD CURRENCY, MAKING ORDERLY PORT OPERATIONS ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT FOR USSR.

5. WHATEVER THE PROBLEMS THE PORT OFFICIALS MAY BE ANTICIPATING, HOWEVER, IT IS CLEARLY UP TO SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN GRAIN BUYING OR MERCHANT VESSELS FIXING TO KEEP THEIR OWN PORT AUTHORITIES INFORMED ON A TIMELY BASIS. OBVIOUSLY, WE CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT OFFER TO PROVIDE A MORE EFFICIENT SUBSTITUTE FOR THEIR OWN INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS. WE ARE DISTURBED AT REFERENCE BY ODESSA PORT OFFICIALS TO "IMPROVEMENTS" THROUGH MORE STRINGENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF PORT ARRIVALS. INsofar AS US SHIPS ARE CONCERNED, THE REQUIREMENTS FOR NOTIFICATION ARE SPELLED OUT IN THE "MEMORANDUM ON USSR PORT PROCEDURES AND OTHER MATTERS" WHICH FORMS A PART OF THE US-USSR MARITIME AGREEMENT. THE MEMORANDUM PROVIDES THAT NOTIFICATION OF A VISIT BY A VESSEL UNDER US FLAG TO A SOVIET PORT ON THE OPEN LIST OF PORTS "MUST BE RECEIVED AT LEAST FOUR DAYS IN ADVANCE OF PORT ENTRY." HENCE EVEN THE FORMER SEVEN-DAY REQUIREMENT

WAS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MARITIME AGREEMENT HAD IT BEEN APPLIED TO US VESSELS. WHILE THE ODESSA OFFICIALS MAY NOT HAVE MEANT TO IMPLY THEIR NEW REGULATIONS WOULD ALSO APPLY TO U.S. SHIPPING - WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING OF THIS FROM MORFLOT IN MOSCOW - THEY APPARENTLY DID NOT EXCLUDE THIS POSSIBILITY. WE HAVE ASKED, THEREFORE, THAT KAP TAKE AN EARLY OCCASION TO POINT OUT TO THEM THAT THE AGREED PROCEDURES UNDER THE MARITIME AGREEMENT ARE BINDING. ONCE THIS HAS BEEN DONE, WE CAN TAKE IT UP WITH THE MINISTRY OF THE MARITIME FLEET (MORFLOT) IN MOSCOW SHOULD THERE BE ANY DISPUTE BY LOCAL SOVIET OFFICIALS OF THIS CLEAR REQUIREMENT. OF COURSE, IF THE DEPARTMENT OR MARAD PREFER, WE COULD MAKE THIS POINT DIRECTLY TO MORFLOT AT ONCE OR IN TANDEM WITH KAP'S ACTION.

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6. KAP WILL SEEK THE FIRST APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO INFORM ODESSA MARITIME OFFICIALS THAT THE CHANGES IN NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES MENTIONED BY THEM CANNOT BE APPLIED TO US MERCHANT VESSELS, THE PORT PROCEDURES OF WHICH ARE COVERED UNDER THE MARITIME AGREEMENT, AND REPORT THE REACTION OF THE PORT OFFICIALS TO THIS INFORMATION.
TOON

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Message Attributes

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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 159568
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ODESSA OFFICIALS CITE MORE STRINGENT REGULATIONS ON ADVANCE PORT NOTIFICATION SUMMARY: TWO ODESSA PORT OFFICIALS IN A RECENT CO
TAGS: EEWT, EWWT, UR, US
To: STATE MARACAIBO
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d82916ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009